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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Kay Johnson, Environmental Initiatives Manager, 268-4251

Wichita area residents: Be Air Aware

Tougher federal air pollution standards coming soon

The Wichita area could face greater health risks and may have to pay for costly air-quality improvement programs if new federal air pollution standards aren't met, City of Wichita officials announced on Wednesday.

The City's announcement follows an earlier Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) decision to implement a tougher ozone standard, beginning in August. The new EPA requirements are expected to lower the ozone standard from 0.075 parts per million (ppm) to somewhere between 0.070 and 0.060.

The new air pollution standards present significant health and financial challenges, Mayor Carl Brewer said at a news briefing. He was by Kay Johnson, the Environmental Initiatives Manager. Johnson referenced a 2005 local environmental study. It concluded that Wichita governments, businesses and residents could face costs totaling \$10 million annually for at least 10 years if the area did not meet ozone standards or became what's known as a nonattainment area.

The penalties for not meeting the federal standards could include 1) increased requirements for residents such as carpooling and mandatory vehicle-emissions testing; 2) increased requirements on industries that could affect a company's plans to expand or relocate; and 3) increased requirements for road projects to prove that they don't contribute to additional air pollution.

"It's critical that residents do their part to help reduce ozone because of the potential health and economic impacts," said Johnson, who announced a Be Air Aware campaign to reduce air pollution and kickoff the ozone season which starts on Thursday.

Brewer asked residents in the Wichita Metropolitan Statistical Area - Sedgwick, Butler, Sumner and Harvey counties - to help reduce smog by reducing vehicle idling, tuning up cars, keeping tires properly inflated and following other seasonal tips (see attachments).

"Everyone can reduce air pollution by changing a few routine habits," Brewer said.

CITY NEWS

Community Relations Team
455 N. Main Wichita, KS 67202
(316) 268-4351 FAX (316) 268-4519
www.wichita.gov

Ozone

Ozone, or air pollution, can harm lungs. Particularly vulnerable are people with asthma, other lung diseases, children and those who spend time outside during spring and summer months. Ozone is caused by the reaction of sunlight, heat and air emissions. Ozone levels are dependent on many factors including weather and routine activities such as driving a vehicle, construction or other activities that use a fuel or emit organic pollution.

The City monitors ozone levels at four locations including near Peck, Park City and Wichita. If one monitor exceeds the new standard, the entire Wichita MSA is in violation.

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